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NATO - WARSAW PACT: MBFR Talks Resume

Prospects remain dim for substantial progress in Vienna as NATO and Warsaw Pact negotiators meet today to begin the 29th round of MBFR talks on reducing conventional forces stationed in Central Europe. [redacted]

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The size of the Pact's ground and air forces continues to be the principal issue in the dispute. Official Eastern figures presented in Vienna claim Pact forces to be 235,000 below Western estimates. [redacted]

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Comment: NATO negotiators believe they are resuming the talks in a strong tactical position, having completed the presentation of the Western draft treaty proposal during the last round. Additional Western initiatives will depend on the East's willingness to move constructively on the data and verification issues. This appears unlikely, although recent off-the-record statements by Soviet arms control officials hint at some Eastern flexibility on verification issues. [redacted]

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The East may urge the West to drop demands that data agreement precede any reductions in exchange for concessions on verification. It also may propose that the US and USSR make some initial troop cuts as a "mutual example," as suggested in the recent Warsaw Pact summit declarations. [redacted]

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JAPAN-USSR: Response to Soviet Threats

The Japanese protest against Soviet statements about the redeployment of intermediate-range missiles from Europe to Siberia and against Soviet media attacks threatening Japan with nuclear destruction for its close ties with the US was unusually strong. [redacted]

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Tokyo's protest was directed at Foreign Minister Gromyko's recent statement that, in the event of an INF agreement in Europe, the USSR probably would redeploy some SS-20 missiles to Siberia. The Japanese also rejected recent Soviet media commentary portraying Soviet actions as a response to Japan's efforts to increase defense capabilities and the decision to station US F-16 fighter planes at Misawa in northeastern Japan. [redacted]

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Comment: Moscow's efforts to influence Japanese public opinion may have been counterproductive. Foreign Ministry officials have told the US Embassy they were surprised by the heavyhanded Soviet attacks on Prime Minister Nakasone's visits to Washington and South Korea. The Japanese media generally have supported the government's position and have focused on the issue as an example of the USSR's efforts to deflect attention from its own greatly increased military strength in East Asia. [redacted]

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Nakasone is concerned about the expansion of Soviet nuclear forces in Asia. He worries that this could be a possible side effect of an INF agreement in Europe. Foreign Minister Abe stated during his recent tour of Western Europe that Japan would like to be included in INF talks. [redacted]

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The hostile attitude of the Soviets toward Tokyo's apparent desire to strengthen Japan's defenses probably will not be affected by the protest. The tone of Moscow's rhetoric indicates that an early move to improve relations is unlikely. [redacted]

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FRANCE-MOROCCO: Mitterrand's Visit

President Mitterrand will use his two-day visit to Morocco beginning today to demonstrate France's commitment to maintaining close bilateral ties. [redacted]

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In a recent speech, the French Ambassador reaffirmed his country's intention to maintain its predominant position in Morocco. He noted that France is Morocco's principal foreign investor and trading partner. The Ambassador also asserted that French strategic interests in the Mediterranean require good relations with Morocco.

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Comment: Mitterrand's visit caps a sustained effort to convince the King that moves by the Socialist government to improve relations with Algeria do not reflect reduced French interest in Morocco.

[redacted]

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Some French Foreign Ministry officials are concerned that closer ties between Morocco and the US eventually could lead to a lessening of French influence. They also worry that relations too openly close between Rabat and Washington could undermine the King's standing in the Arab world.

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NIGERIA: Uneasy Calm

The US Embassy reports that there has been no new rioting in Lagos since Tuesday. The disturbances were in protest against government corruption and against some 3 million West African immigrants now being expelled by the government.

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Comment: President Shagari's continued absence from the country has created a leadership vacuum that has made it difficult for authorities to cope with the situation. Renewed violence against the immigrants would further encourage the impression that the government is losing control and prompt students to foment new incidents.

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INDIA: Sikhs Renew Agitation

Militant Sikhs demanding increased autonomy in their home state of Punjab probably were responsible for bomb explosions yesterday in the Sikh holy city of Amritsar. [redacted] the US Embassy say that support for the militants is growing and that large-scale protests are likely beginning today now that Sikh leaders have broken off negotiations with New Dehli. The central government reportedly has sent additional security elements to Punjab to control Sikh demonstrations. [redacted]

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Comment: Prime Minister Gandhi probably will make no major concessions because of strong Hindu opposition to Sikh demands for autonomy. Increased Sikh violence would complicate Indian-US relations. Ghandhi believes that Sikh dissident groups are being funded by Sikh expatriates in the US, and New Delhi has criticized Washington for not barring visits to the US by Jagjit Chauhan, a prominent, European-based leader of the Sikh independence movement. [redacted]

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INDIA-CHINA: Outlook for Normalization

The third round of Sino-Indian border talks that begins on Saturday in Beijing is unlikely to achieve a major breakthrough, but some progress may be made on establishing a negotiating framework and on taking further confidence-building measures. The Indian Ambassador to China recently told US diplomats that he has the impression New Delhi is now more willing to discuss specific details. Both sides thus far have stuck to their preliminary positions, with India rejecting China's call for a package deal involving mutual concessions. [redacted]

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Comment: There is little chance of progress unless the Indians show some flexibility, but Prime Minister Gandhi's recent losses in state elections probably will make her even more reluctant to take initiatives that could be exploited by the opposition. China is unwilling to offer unilateral concessions, partly to avoid a precedent for territorial negotiations with the USSR. Peking and New Delhi nevertheless want to keep the talks going and to expand trade and cultural ties. [redacted]

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ZAIRE: Anticorruption Drive

The Zairian Government has launched its most extensive anticorruption campaign in years, and President Mobutu has empowered his aggressive new Prime Minister to direct the campaign. Over 70 people, including several senior officials and businessmen, have been arrested for misappropriation of funds, and many more are under investigation. Some prominent individuals--including one of Mobutu's sons--have been implicated. [REDACTED]

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Comment: The campaign is one of a number of measures Mobutu has taken to improve his standing abroad and to help him obtain new assistance from the IMF later this year. He also may hope that the highly publicized investigations and arrests will restore some of his popularity at home. Thus far, most of the accused are middle-level functionaries. Mobutu would have to authorize the Prime Minister to crack down on a large number of corrupt senior officials for the campaign to have a major impact. [REDACTED]

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